

NATIONAL FOOD SECURITY ACT, 2013

A Primer



EDUCATE, AGITATE, ORGANISE

RIGHT TO FOOD CAMPAIGN, 2016

15588

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National Food Security Act 2013

A Primer

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Foreword

This booklet is part of a series of Primers prepared for the 6th National Convention on the Right to Food and Work (Ranchi, 23-25 September 2016). The purpose of these Primers is to help you to know your rights and how to defend them.

The Primers focus on different economic and social rights, including the right to information, the right to food, the right to work, forest rights, children's rights, the right to education, and more. They are written in simple language, for a wide audience.

The Primers are action-oriented: it is hoped that they will be used in collective struggles for social and economic rights. For further information as well as ideas for action, please take a look at the website of the Right to Food Campaign (righttofoodcampaign.in). To order copies of these primers, please contact the secretariat of the campaign.

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INTRODUCTION

The National Food Security Act (NFSA) was enacted by the Indian Parliament on 10 September 2013, after a long struggle for legal recognition of the right to food. The Act falls far short of the demands that were made in this campaign, yet it includes some useful provisions. This primer introduces you to the basic features of the NFSA, and discusses what people can do to secure and expand their entitlements under the Act.

Prior to the NFSA, some aspects of the right to food were recognised in Supreme Court orders. For instance, a series of orders were issued in response to a writ petition filed in 2001 by the People's Union for Civil Liberties. The petition argued that right to food derives from the fundamental "right to life" enshrined in Article 21 of the Indian Constitution. In other words, it is everyone's fundamental right to be free from hunger and undernutrition. Thus, the state has an obligation to guarantee all requirements of good nutrition, including not only nutritious food but also clean water, health care, and so on. The case is still on, meanwhile many "interim orders" have been passed, e.g. on midday meals, social security pensions and the Public Distribution System.

Three years have gone since the passage of the NFSA, yet its implementation is still very incomplete. Some states are yet to bring their Public Distribution System (PDS) in line with the Act, and maternity benefits are still missing everywhere except in Tamil Nadu and Odisha. The quality of nutrition programmes for children also leaves much to be desired in most states. But

there are also states where the Act has been well used to expand and improve these entitlements. And almost everywhere, the Act has led to a major revival of interest in food security issues among political parties, the news media, civil society and the public at large. This is an opportunity to take the right to food forward in the near future.

A SHORT HISTORY OF THE ACT

The Supreme Court has long recognised the right to food as an aspect of the right to life (interpreted as a right to live with dignity) under Article 21 of the Constitution. Over the years, and especially from 2001 onwards, the Court issued numerous interim orders aimed at making the state accountable for the right to food. A nation-wide campaign for the right to food, including a right to food act, emerged as an offshoot of the Public Interest Litigation that led to many of these orders (*PUCL vs Union of India and others, Writ Petition [Civil] 196 of 2001*).

In its 2009 election manifesto, the Indian National Congress promised to enact some sort of right to food law. A four-year battle followed over the shape of this legislation. The basics of the food security act were debated among a broad range of actors including social movements, political parties, the National Advisory Council (NAC), the Commissioners appointed by the Supreme Court, and government committees along with many organisations and individuals involved in the right to food campaign.

he first draft of the National Food Security Bill, prepared by an empowered Group of Ministers, opted for a minimalist interpretation of food security. It provided for the distribution of 25 kg of foodgrains (wheat and rice) per month to “below poverty line” (BPL) households only, i.e. 37 per cent of the country’s population. After this draft faced severe criticism, the responsibility to re-draft the law was given to the NAC. After extensive consultations with the right to food campaign, Left parties and civil society, the draft prepared by the NAC was submitted to the Prime Minister in July 2011. However, the National Food Security Bill introduced in Parliament by the Government of India in Parliament was a trimmed version of the NAC bill, as the Prime Minister’s Economic Council did not approve of the high cost involved. The Bill was subsequently referred to a Parliamentary Standing Committee, which too didn’t expand the scope of the food bill, though it proposed some helpful changes in the framework of the Bill.

The final outcome of these debates and reviews of the right to food bill was an Act that gave modest entitlements. Compared to the demands of the right to food campaign, the National Food Security Act did not go very far. Nevertheless, the NFSA did create some valuable legal entitlements for households, children below six years, children aged 6-14 years, and pregnant and lactating mothers based on a life-cycle approach.

BASIC FEATURES OF THE NFSA

What are people's entitlements under the National Food Security Act?

The Act defines three sets of basic entitlements:

1. Subsidized foodgrains under the Public Distribution System (PDS).*
2. Nutritious food for children as well as pregnant and lactating women.
3. Maternity entitlements for pregnant women.

More precisely, NFSA entitlements are as follows:

PDS entitlements

- Antyodaya (AAY) households: 35 kg of foodgrains per month at Rs 3/kg for rice, Rs 2/kg for wheat, Re 1/kg for millets.
- Priority households: 5 kg per person per month at the same prices.

Nutritious food

- Free supplementary nutrition (cooked meals or “take-home rations”) for children below the age of 6 years at the local Anganwadi. For children below 6 months, the Act prescribes promotion of exclusive breastfeeding.

* The Act uses the term “Targeted Public Distribution System” (TPDS), but the word “targeted”, if appropriate at all, is superfluous for our purposes.

- A hot, cooked, nutritious midday meal every day for school children up to Class 8 or within the age group of 6-14 years, whichever is applicable.
- One free, nutritious meal every day from the local Anganwadi for women during pregnancy and six months after childbirth, in the form of take-home rations.



Midday meals at schools and anganwadi must meet the norms of the food security act.

Maternity entitlements

- Cash grants of at least Rs 6,000 per child (in instalments), for every woman not already benefiting from maternity entitlements under other laws or through regular government employment.

PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM

What is the coverage of the PDS under the National Food Security Act?

The National Food Security Act requires the PDS to cover at least 75 per cent of the rural population and 50 per cent of the urban population at the all-India level. These ratios are adjusted state-wise, so that the coverage is higher in the poorer states. For instance, in rural Jharkhand, the mandatory coverage is 86 per cent – this is a minimum, not a maximum. For further details of state-wise coverage, see Appendix.

Who is eligible for PDS entitlements?

Under the Act, “eligible households” are divided into two categories: Antyodaya households (the poorest of the poor) and Priority households.

The Antyodaya scheme was in place before the NFSA and continues as before. The coverage of Antyodaya, state-wise, is specified by the Central Government.

Priority households is a new category. It replaces the old “below poverty line” (BPL) category, which was marred with inclusion and exclusion errors.

It is the responsibility of state governments to notify eligibility criteria and identify Priority and Antyodaya households. Some have done that using the 2011 Socio-Economic and Caste Census (SECC) of 2011, others have used a different approach, e.g. self-declaration.

The NFSA had given 365 days (from 5 July 2013) to the state governments to complete this process of identification of eligible households. However, by the time this deadline expired (5 July 2014), only 8 states had done so. Because of delay in identifying eligible households, the Central Government kept extending the deadline for implementation of the Act – without amending it, as required. As on 20 July 2016, all states except Tamil Nadu are supposed to be implementing PDS entitlements under the Act. However, some states (e.g. Uttar Pradesh) are still in the process of putting in place a reformed PDS in line with the Act.



Every ration shop must have a full-fledged information board. Electronic weighing machines also help.

What are the entitlements of Priority and Antyodaya households?

Priority households are entitled to 5 kg of foodgrains (rice, wheat or millets) per person per month. Thus, the PDS entitlements of a Priority household would vary according to household size.

Antyodaya households are entitled to 35 kg of foodgrains per month irrespective of the household size.

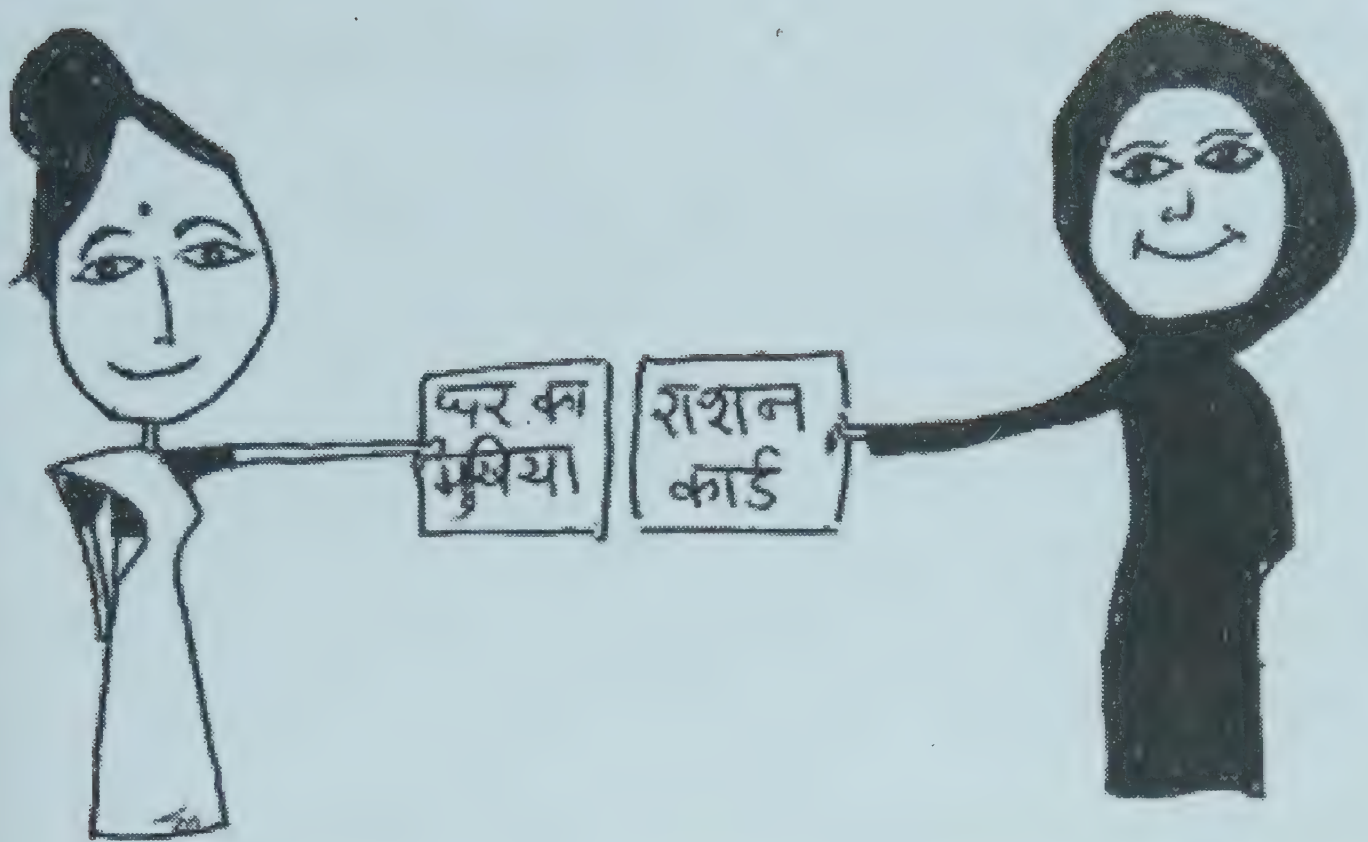
For both categories, prices are as follows: Rs 3/kg for rice, Rs 2/kg for wheat, Re 1/kg for millets. The Act authorises the Central Government to revise these prices after July 2016. So far, however, that has not happened.

Foodgrain Entitlements under NFSA

Entitlement	Quantity	Price	Coverage
Priority household	5 kg per person per month	Rice: Rs 3/kg Wheat: Rs 2/kg Millets: Re 1/kg	Rural: 75% Urban: 50%
Antyodaya household	35 kg per household per month		

Who is the household head on NFSA ration card?

As per the Act, the eldest woman in the household (not less than eighteen years of age) should be considered as the head of the household for the purpose of issue of ration cards. As things stand, some states have followed this provision and others not.



The eldest woman in the family is the household head as far as ration cards are concerned

CHILDREN'S ENTITLEMENTS

Indian children are among the most undernourished in the world. The damage to physical growth and brain development due to undernutrition during the first two or three years of life is irreversible. In any case, young children have special nutritional needs that families are often unable to meet for lack of money, time, knowledge, power, commitment or access to health care and other essential services. Keeping this in view, the NFSA includes various provisions to protect children's right to food and improve their health and wellbeing.

The Act prescribes the promotion of exclusive breastfeeding for children up to the age of six months. Children between the ages

of six months and 14 years are entitled to free, nutritious meals at Anganwadis and schools.

Children’s Food Entitlements under NFSA

Categories	Type of meal or food, subject to nutritional norms specified in Schedule II of the Act
Children aged between 6 months and 3 years	Take-home ration as per ICDS guidelines in conformity with the provisions of the Act
Malnourished children aged between 6 months and 3 years	Same as above, with food supplement of 800 calories and 20-25 grams of protein
Children in the age group of 3-6 years	Morning snack and hot cooked meal as per ICDS norms
Malnourished children in the age group of 3-6 years	Same as above, with supplement of 300 calories and 8-10 grams protein
Children in the age group of 6-14 years	One hot cooked mid-day meal at school

Where can the meals be prepared?

According to the NFSA, all Anganwadis and government schools must have cooking, drinking water and sanitation facilities. Hence, all meals have to be locally prepared, except in urban areas where centralised kitchens may be used.

MATERNITY ENTITLEMENTS

One progressive aspect of the NFSA is that it affirms women's right to maternity entitlements, even though the minimum amount (Rs 6,000 per child) is very low. Pregnant and lactating women are also entitled to one free, nutritious meal every day at the local Anganwadi. These entitlements attempt to break the inter-generational cycle of malnutrition and also to enable women to claim their right to better rest and nutrition during pregnancy.

What is the case for maternity entitlements?

Women's need for nutrition, particularly iron, increases sharply during pregnancy. Lack of iron leads to anaemia. According to the National Family Health Survey 2005-6, 58 per cent of Indian women in the age group of 15-49 years are anaemic. Moreover, many Indian women are constrained to do hard manual labour until very close to the end of their pregnancy, and resume work soon after delivery. For these and other reasons, there is an urgent need to recognise every woman's right to maternity entitlements as well as adequate rest and nutrition during pregnancy. Maternity entitlements in cash act as a partial compensation for loss of wages during pregnancy, and help pregnant women to have adequate rest. In addition, maternity entitlements contribute to children's right to food, by reducing the risk of low birthweight (often due to lack of weight gain during pregnancy) and promoting exclusive breastfeeding until the age of six months.

Are the maternity entitlements under NFSA universal?

Yes. As per the NFSA, “every pregnant woman and lactating mother shall be entitled to: a) meal, free of charge, during pregnancy and six months after the child birth, through the local Anganwadi, so as to meet the nutritional standards specified in Schedule II; and (b) maternity benefit of not less than rupees six thousand, in such instalments as may be prescribed by the Central Government.” However, women entitled to maternity entitlements through regular government or receiving similar benefits under other laws are not eligible for maternity entitlements under NFSA.



Pregnant women are entitled to nutritious take-home rations and income support of Rs 6000 in cash

What is the status of implementation of maternity entitlements?

The NFSA leaves it to the Central Government to devise a “scheme” through which cash maternity entitlement would be delivered. However, the Ministry of Women and Child Development is yet to finalise the required scheme. Meanwhile, it implements a pilot maternity entitlement scheme, Indira Gandhi Matritva Sahyog Yojana (IGMSY) in 53 selected districts. However, this scheme is restricted to women above the age of 19 years, and to the first two births. Further, the implementation of IGMSY is quite haphazard in many of the pilot districts.

Questioned by the Supreme Court on this, the Ministry of Women and Child Development filed a very misleading affidavit on 30 October 2015, claiming that it was planning to extend IGMSY from 53 pilot districts to 200 districts in 2015-6 and to all districts in 2016-7. Contrary to this claim, the budget allocation for IGMSY in the 2016-7 Union Budget remains a measly Rs 400 crore (as in 2015-6 and 2014-5), making it impossible to go beyond the 53 pilot districts. Universal maternity entitlements of Rs 6,000 per child, a very modest and outdated norm, would require an annual allocation of Rs 15,000 crore at the very least.

Tamil Nadu and Odisha are the only states that have gone beyond IGMSY and introduced their own maternity entitlements schemes. In Tamil Nadu, the Dr. Muthulakshmi Maternity Assistance Scheme (MAMTA) provides Rs. 12,000 per

delivery, to be paid in three instalments of Rs. 4,000 each. In Odisha, the MAMTA scheme provides Rs. 5,000 in four instalments. However, both schemes are restricted to women above 19 years and the first two births.

TRANSPARENCY AND GRIEVANCE REDRESS

The NFSA includes some important provisions for transparency and grievance redress, even though much stronger provisions were dropped from early drafts of the Act. The Act mandates all states to set up effective internal grievance redress systems, e.g. activate help lines and designate nodal officers. The NFSA also mandates the state government to set up an independent two-tier system for monitoring and review of the implementation of the Act, involving District Grievance Redressal Officers (DGROs) and a State Food Commission.

The Act requires the State Food Commission to perform the wide-ranging functions, including monitoring the Act, enquiring into violations of entitlements, advising the state government and its agencies, hearing appeals against orders of the DGRO, and preparing annual reports for the State Assembly. It also gives extensive powers to the Commission. For instance, when enquiring into violations of the Act, the Commission has “all the powers of a civil court” (Section 20), including the power to summon witnesses, question concerned parties under oath, requisition public records, and more.

What is the role of the District Grievance Redressal Officer?

The DGRO is responsible for enforcing the entitlements under the NFSA, as well as for speedy and effective redressal of grievances of aggrieved persons. The DGRO has to hear complaints regarding violations of entitlements and take necessary action. The manner and time frame for taking action on complaints is to be prescribed by the state government.

The intention is that the DGRO should be a separate post, with full powers and facilities, and also that the DGRO should be independent of the implementation machinery. Unfortunately, many states are simply “designating” officers such as the District Collector as DGRO, defeating the purpose of appointing an independent grievance redressal authority.

Where to file a complaint?

In case of a grievance (e.g. violation of entitlements), a complaint should be filed with the DGRO. Complaints can also be filed on the internal grievance redress system through toll-free helplines or websites depending on the nature of the complaint. However, the internal grievance redress system often has no clear mechanism or time frame to track the progress on your complaint.

Can any person access PDS-related records?

Yes. The NFSA mandates that all PDS-related records should be disclosed and kept open for public inspection. In many states, the Act has led to major improvements in the transparency of the PDS, including the development of helpful Monitoring and

Information Systems (MIS). There is much scope for further use of this powerful provision of the Act, e.g. for social audits and people's vigilance. Section 28 of the Act calls for state and central governments to facilitate social audits of the PDS and related schemes by local authorities.

What are Vigilance Committees and what are their responsibilities?

Vigilance committees for the PDS are mandatory under the Public Distribution System (Control) Order 2001, not only at the Fair Price Shop (FPS) level but also at block, district and state levels. At the FPS level, the key responsibility of the vigilance committee is to act as a watchdog and ensure that all cardholders get their entitlements on time at the right price.

Under the NFSA (Section 29(2)), Vigilance Committees are expected to perform three main functions: (a) regularly supervise the implementation of all schemes under the Act; (b) inform the DGRO, in writing, of any violation of the Act; and (c) inform the DGRO, in writing, of any malpractice or misappropriation of funds that may come to light.

When and how is the food security allowance given?

Under NFSA (Section 8), there is a provision for a so-called "food security allowance", that is, a cash allowance to be given by way of compensation in cases where people are deprived of their entitlements under the PDS, midday meals or related schemes. The amount and time frame are to be prescribed by the Central Government, but the allowance is to be paid by the state government. According to Section 7 of the Food Security

Allowance Rules 2015, state governments are liable to pay the allowance within three weeks of the month when failure of food entitlements occurred.

How to claim the food security allowance?

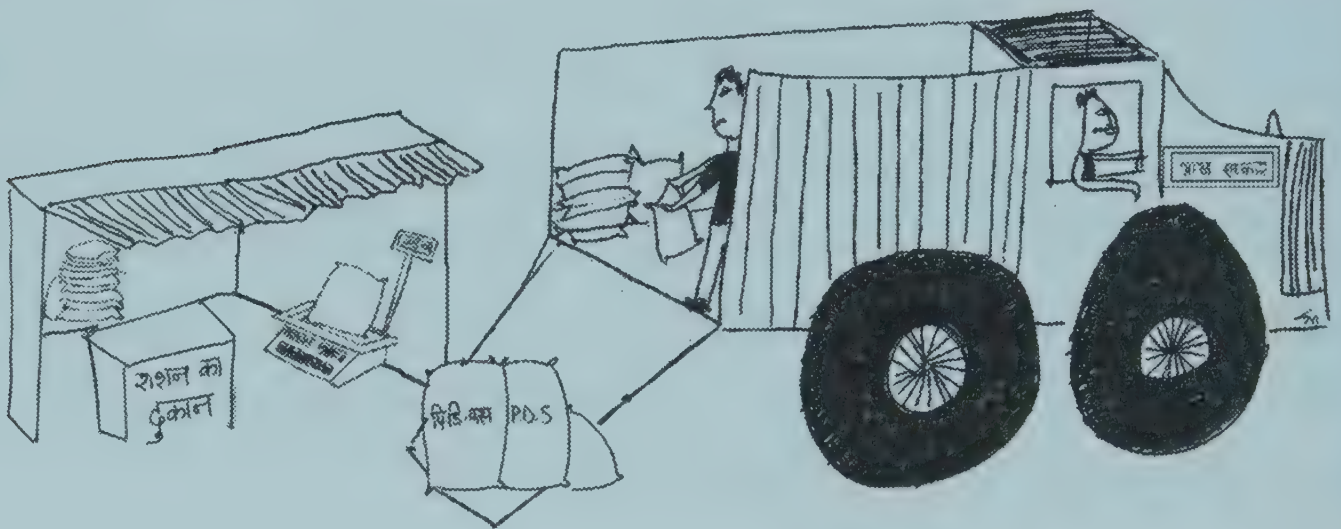
Also according to the 2015 Rules, the designated nodal officer has to verify the status of supply of foodgrain to entitled persons at the end of each month. In case of non-supply, the nodal officer has to record this in writing and ensure the payment of food security allowance through bank accounts. For those who do not have bank account, cash payments can be made. Further, if the reason for non-supply of foodgrain is wilful lapse on the part of a PDS dealer, the nodal officer has to register a complaint with the DGRO.

How is the food security allowance computed?

Still according to the Rules the amount of food security allowance is supposed to be calculated by taking the difference between 1.25 times the Minimum Support Price (MSP) of the relevant foodgrain and the price specified in Schedule I to the Act, and then multiplying this by the relevant quantity, i.e. the quantity of which people have been deprived. For instance, if a four-member Priority household has been deprived of its due 20 kg of wheat for a month, and if the MSP for wheat is Rs 15 per kg, then the food security allowance would be $[(1.25 \times 15) - 2] \times 20 = \text{Rs } 335$.

PDS REFORMS

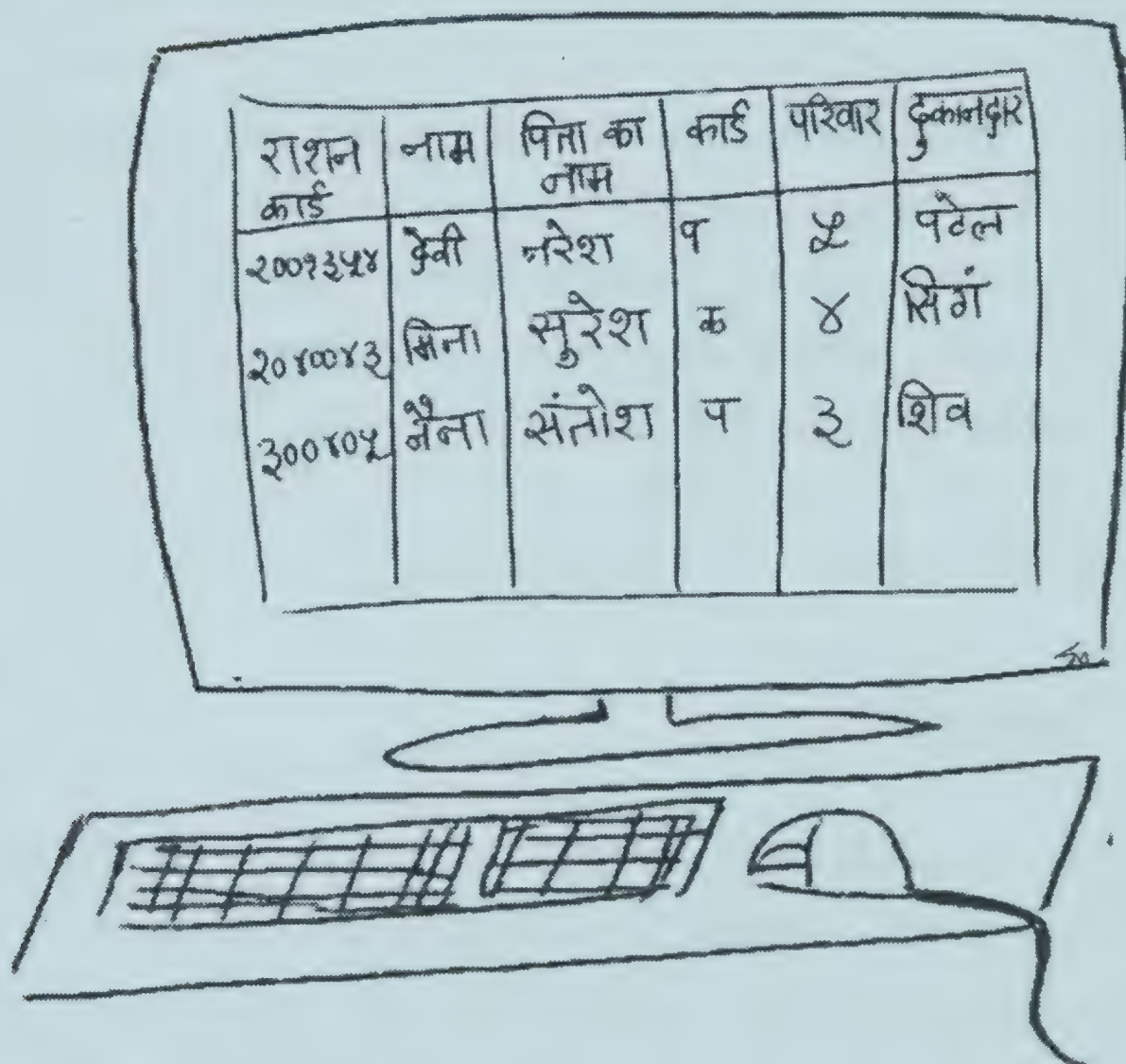
The NFSA instructs the central and state governments to “progressively undertake necessary reforms in the Targeted Public Distribution System”. The following reforms are explicitly listed in the Act (Section 12):



Essential PDS reforms include “doorstep delivery”: food is delivered to ration shops by independent agencies.

- (a) doorstep delivery of foodgrains to PDS outlets;
- (b) application of information and communication technology tools including end-to-end computerisation in order to ensure transparent recording of transactions at all levels;
- (c) leveraging "Aadhaar" for unique identification, with biometric information of entitled beneficiaries;
- (d) full transparency of records;
- (e) preference to public institutions or public bodies such as Panchayats, self-help groups and co-operatives in

- licensing of fair price shops, and management of fair price shops by women or their collectives;
- (f) diversification of commodities distributed under the PDS, over a period of time;
- (g) support to local public distribution models and grains banks;
- (h) “introducing schemes, such as, cash transfer, food coupons, or other schemes... as may be prescribed by the Central Government”.



Computerization of ration cards helps to impart transparency and prevent corruption

Over the past three years, many states have made significant progress with PDS reforms. For instance, doorstep delivery and end-to-end computerisation are in place in most states. Both of these reforms have significantly helped in plugging corruption and leakages at different levels of the supply chain. The digitisation of the PDS has also made ration-card lists more transparent and accessible for independent verification.

However, some reforms introduced under Section 12, such as the imposition of Aadhaar-based biometric identification over the internet using “Point of Sale” (PoS) machines, are proving very disruptive. This system requires many fragile technologies to work at the same time: the PoS machine, the internet, the fingerprint recognition process, and the mobile network. In addition, the data groundwork (including Aadhaar seeding) must have been done correctly. In many areas, this technology is wholly inappropriate and often ends up depriving many people of their PDS entitlements.

CASH TRANSFERS

Cash transfers have been listed as one of the possible PDS reforms in the NFSA. While cash transfers may be appropriate for some purposes (e.g. maternity entitlements and social security pensions), they pose many problems as an alternative to the PDS, especially in the poorer states. First, the required banking infrastructure is still lacking in many areas, and especially for poor households. Second, it is hard to trust the

government to index cash transfers to the price level, especially in the light of recent experience with social security pensions for the elderly (the Central Government's contribution has stagnated at a measly Rs 200 per month since 2006). Third, cash can easily be misused by irresponsible family members unlike rice or wheat that can only be eaten in small quantities day after day. Fourth, dismantling the PDS would also mean dismantling foodgrain procurement, with unpredictable and possibly disruptive consequences for local food markets and food prices.

Cash transfers are often seen as a magic bullet against corruption in the PDS, and a means of reducing government expenditure on food subsidies. PDS leakages have certainly been too high, but recent experience shows that there are ways to plug them. Further, cash transfers pose their own problems: recent experience with wage payments under the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) is extremely sobering. There is no evidence that cash transfers are necessarily a superior alternative to transfers in kind under the PDS.

Recent experiments with cash transfers

Some state governments have started replacing the PDS with cash transfers, even before ensuring that the provisions of the NFSA are effectively implemented. This is being done once the necessary requirements like digitisation of beneficiary databases is in place along with linking of Aadhaar number with the bank account.

So far, attempts to roll out cash transfers have been made in three Union Territories: Chandigarh, Puducherry and Dadra and Nagar Haveli. These areas were selected because priority is being given to urban areas where banks are more accessible. However, the pilot in Dadra and Nagar Haveli has not taken off due to public protests over the fear of food insecurity. The key concerns with cash transfers in Dadra and Nagar Haveli are relatively poor accessibility of banks compared with PDS and difficulty in navigating the banking system for poor families or those with low levels of education. Further, as 80 per cent of families in Dadra and Nagar Haveli have Antyodaya cards, replacing the monthly entitlement of 35 kg with cash makes them more food insecure.

Protests have erupted in Puducherry as well during an earlier attempt of the local government (in February and March 2015) to run a cash transfer pilot. During the transition, people didn't receive grain for months and the salaries of PDS salespersons were heavily delayed. Opposition parties organised street protests, and the pilot was stopped after eight weeks. However, the Central Government relaunched the cash transfers pilot in September 2015 - this time not just in Puducherry but also in Chandigarh.

In Chandigarh as well, the cash transfer pilot was a rushed decision as the government is yet to identify more than half of its NFSA beneficiaries. NFSA is supposed to cover 4.96 persons (Priority and Antyodaya combined) in Chandigarh, but up to May 2016 only 2 lakh had been covered. Further, among the 55,917 families (not persons) identified, only 47,250 were

receiving cash transfers up to July 2016. The rest were not receiving cash because their Aadhaar number was not linked with their bank account. This imposition of Aadhaar as a requirement for the receipt of NFSA benefits is a violation of the Supreme Court orders dated 11 August 2015. The apex court's order clearly states that "production of an Aadhaar card will not be condition for obtaining any benefits otherwise due to a citizen". Despite this, the Chandigarh administration has made it a mandatory document and denied entitlements to nearly 15 per cent of existing beneficiaries under NFSA.

LIMITATIONS OF THE NFSA

Although the NFSA is certainly a step towards realisation of the right to food, it has some severe limitations in terms of addressing the complex problem of malnutrition. Firstly, the Act focuses mainly on cereals, i.e. rice, wheat and millets. The provision for diversifying PDS commodities (e.g. extend the PDS to pulses and edible oil, as some states have already done) only features as a future goal. Furthermore, even millets that have high nutritive value are not being promoted in practice. It is only under nutrition programmes for children and pregnant women that the NFSA provides scope for extend the right to food beyond cereals.

Second, the NFSA does not give any specific entitlements to adolescent girls, who are in dire need of nutrition support. The Rapid Survey on Children 2013 found that more than 43

percent of adolescent girls are severely thin, i.e. have a Body Mass Index of less than 17. The nutritional needs of this group are briefly mentioned under Schedule III of the NFSA, among other provisions that are expected to be “progressively realised” (Section 31). Other vulnerable groups, such as single women, the elderly, and persons with disabilities, are also largely ignored in the Act.

Third, important provisions for revitalisation of agriculture, such as agrarian reforms, livelihood security to farmers and others, have been listed only as potential measures to advance food security. In other words, they have been left out from the current ambit of the NFSA. These and other entitlements were included in early drafts of the NFSA prepared by the National Advisory Council (NAC), but they were dropped later on.

Thus, in effect the NFSA limits itself largely to specific provisions (foodgrain rations, maternity entitlements and food supplements for children) that can only go some way towards the realisation of the right to food and nutrition security. And as we say, even these limited provisions are yet to be fully implemented, especially maternity entitlements.

WHAT WE CAN DO

The NFSA creates valuable entitlements, but claiming these entitlements requires sustained effort by people themselves. This section presents some ideas on what we can do.

Spreading awareness of entitlements

The first step is to ensure that people are aware of their rights under the Act. This can be done through public meetings, awareness drives, trainings, workshops and other means. This primer can be useful material for these exercises. Posters, parchas, short films, street plays and wall writing are other effective ways of spreading awareness about the Act.

Monitoring entitlement programmes

Active monitoring is required to ensure effective and corruption-free functioning of the PDS and other NFSA-related programmes. Here are some examples of what to monitor:

- Do all eligible households in the village have a ration card?
- Are the names of all household members included on their ration card?
- Are households getting their full quota of foodgrains every month?
- Are they paying the right price?
- Have Antyodaya cards been fairly distributed, to the poorest households?
- Are children getting midday meals regularly at the local school or Anganwadi, as per nutritional norms prescribed in the Act?
- Does the local Anganwadi open on time every day?
- Make sure to verify the entries in your ration card

वर्ष				
माह	चावल	गेहूँ	मीठा अनाज	दुकानदार का हस्ताक्षर
मई	10	10	10	
जून	10	5	15	
जुलाई	20	5	5	
अगस्त	10	10	10	

वर्ष				
माह	चावल	गेहूँ	मीठा अनाज	दुकानदार का हस्ताक्षर
सित अक्त नव पुस फ जन	5	15	10	

राशन कार्ड

Make sure to verify the entries in your ration card

Complaining about irregularities

If people's entitlements are being denied, swift action is essential. Try to get the issue resolved locally, but if that does not work, take it to higher "authorities".

For example, if households are not getting their full quota of foodgrain, question the PDS dealer. If he does not mend his ways or claims that he is not getting the full quota himself, alert the concerned block-level officer (the Marketing Officer in this case). Make sure to examine the records – remember, they are in the public domain. If the matter remains unresolved, approach the DGRO or even appeal to the State Food Commission. Street protests, of course, can also help to ensure that these officers take the matter seriously.

Similarly, if there are gaps in the provision of meals to children at the Anganwadi, discuss the matter with the Anganwadi Worker. If the issue is beyond her control, inform the Supervisor or the Child Development Project Officer. (See the companion primers on ICDS and midday meals for further discussion of public action for children's right to food.)

Advocacy and media work

Local action is not likely to be very effective in resolving issues that require a change in policy. For instance, asking the Anganwadi worker or school principal to provide eggs with midday meals is unlikely to help if midday meal guidelines do not provide for eggs. Achieving policy changes requires active advocacy with policy-makers such as Members of Legislative Assembly (MLAs), the concerned Minister and the Chief

Minister. Advocacy methods can range from meeting policy-makers with a “charter of demands” to organising rallies and protests in the state capital, submitting memoranda to the District Collector or Block Development Officer and issuing statements in the media. Some demands in the context of the NFSA can be:

- Implementation of maternity entitlements across all states.
- Introduction of pulses and edible oil in the PDS, to improve people’s nutrition.
- Implementation of PDS reforms such as door-step delivery of foodgrains, computerisation of ration card lists, full transparency of records, etc.
- Provision of an Antyodaya card to all those who are entitled to it under Supreme Court orders.
- Inclusion of nutritious items such as eggs and fruits in midday meals at all schools and Anganwadis.

Research for action

Careful research can provide useful evidence to highlight irregularities and advocate policy changes. For example, recent research on the adverse impact of imposing Aadhaar-based biometric authentication in the PDS has helped to slow down this counter-productive innovation. Often, it is useful to follow field-based research with a public hearing or other public event, to share the findings widely, discuss them with concerned officials, demand accountability for irregularities and seek redressal of grievances.

FURTHER RESOURCES

If you have access to the internet, you may be interested in the website of the right to food campaign (righttofoodcampaign.in). This site has a lot of material on various aspects of the right to food, including the full text of Supreme Court orders on the right to food, a soft copy of these Primers, guidelines for conducting field surveys, campaign material (e.g. leaflets, posters, songs, films), and lots of articles and field reports.

State-wise information on PDS entitlements, along with toll-free Helpline numbers, is available at righttofoodcampaign.in/food-act/state-information

You can also contact the office of the Commissioners (see below for details) or the secretariat of the Right to Food Campaign for guidance (see the back cover for details).

Office of the Commissioners of the Supreme Court:

B 68, 2nd Floor, Sarvodaya Enclave, New Delhi 110017

Telefax: +91-11-41829631; phone: +91-11-26851335/339;

Email: sc.commissioners@gmail.com,

Website: www.sccommissioners.org

(Note: The Commissioners have an “advisor” in many states, you can check his or her name and address from the Commissioners’ office. If you notice any violation of Supreme Court orders in your area, and if you are unable to obtain redressal from local authorities, please contact the Commissioners or their advisor in your state.)

APPENDIX

	Population (lakh)			Mandatory PDS coverage under NFSA (%)			Actual PDS coverage as % of mandatory coverage (as on 6.4.16)	Number of households to be covered under AAY (lakh)	Actual no of households covered under AAY (as on 31.5.2016)
	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban	Total ^a			
Andhra Pradesh	328	165	494	61	41	54	100	9.6	9.1
Assam	268	44	312	84	60	81	96	7.0	7.0
Bihar	921	117	1038	85	75	81	98	25.0	25.0
Chhattisgarh	196	59	255	84	60	84	100	7.2	7.2
Gujarat	347	257	604	75	48	63	88	8.1	3.0
Jharkhand	250	79	330	86	60	80	88	9.2	9.2
Karnataka	376	236	611	76	49	66	100	12	11.0
Madhya Pradesh	525	201	726	80	63	75	93	15.8	14.3
Maharashtra	615	508	1124	76	45	62	100	25.1	25.1
Odisha	350	70	419	82	56	78	92	12.7	8.6
Punjab	173	104	277	55	45	51	100	1.8	1.8
Rajasthan	515	171	686	69	53	65	100	9.3	9.3
Tamil Nadu	372	350	721	63	38	51	-	18.7	18.7
Telangana	235	118	353	61	41	54	99	6.0	5.7
Uttar Pradesh	1551	445	1996	80	64	76	92	41.0	40.9
West Bengal	622	291	913	74	48	66	91	19.9	14.8
INDIA	8332	3771	12103	75	50	67	n/a	250.0	229.9

^a Calculated as a population-weighted average of the rural and urban ratios.
Source: *Foodgrain Bulletin* (May 2016), Department of Food and Public Distribution. Population figures from Census of India 2011.

If you found this primer useful, please share it with others and help to disseminate it widely. There are many ways of doing this, such as:

- Organising a group discussion on this primer in your village or mohalla.
- Using sections of this primer to make posters or parchas. The posters can be put up in public places such as the local school, anganwadi, Panchayat Bhawan etc.
- Distributing or selling copies of this primer.
- Translating this primer in the local languages (there is no copyright!).

Copies of this Primer, and of other Primers in this series (in English and Hindi), are available from the Secretariat of the Right to Food Campaign – see back cover.

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2. Right to Information Act 2005: A Primer
3. National Rural Employment Guarantee Act 2005: A Primer
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7. PESA 1996: A Primer
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12. Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act: A Primer

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